



Media Reality Check

A Twice-Daily Analysis of Network Convention Coverage  Monday Afternoon, August 14, 2000

Good Afternoon!

Welcome to the Media Research Center's examination of Democratic convention coverage delivered by fax, e-mail and posted on our Web site. This edition concentrates on coverage from Monday morning's talk shows.

Tomorrow morning, we'll have a complete review of tonight's prime time network coverage.

For the complete collection of these issues, including those published during the Republican convention, please go to <http://www.mrc.org> and click on "Campaign 2000." You'll be able to access issues as regular HTML files or view them as Adobe PDF files.

Don't miss the videoclips posted each day to illustrate the documented bias: Check the MRC home page and the "Campaign 2000" page for the latest.

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CBS Host Praises Political Ascent of "Unapologetic Liberal" Invisible Donna Reappears on Morning Shows

Gore campaign chief Donna Brazile suddenly appeared today on the networks' morning shows, but faced mostly soft questioning. No one was rude enough to mention that she hasn't been interviewed on network TV in seven months, since she implied in January that Gen. Colin Powell was a token: "Republicans bring out Powell because they have no program, no policy. They would rather take pictures with black children than feed them." By contrast, her white subordinate, consultant Bob Shrum, has appeared for six network interviews, including four Sunday morning shows.

■ On CBS, Bryant Gumbel complained to Brazile, "**You're an unapologetic liberal. Al Gore is a self-described centrist. Why doesn't that disconnect disturb you?**" He praised her political ascent: "You were a story in and of yourself, the first African-American woman to head a major presidential campaign. What's the significance of that for you?" He added: "**At the risk of embarrassing you, you're a more considerable story than that. Your mother was a maid, your father was a janitor, yet here you sit running a presidential campaign. What's that say about you?**" Without citing examples, Gumbel did tell Brazile that "you have gained a reputation as someone who leads with their mouth. Do you regret some of the things you've said?"

■ On ABC, Charles Gibson trumpeted Gore's strengths, asking: "**Here's a guy running with an economy that's humming along, a foreign policy that's in great shape, no foreign crises, and you're down significantly in the polls. Why hasn't he been able to connect?**" Then he gave Brazile the chance to run down the opposition: "Your sense about the Republican convention and its image of inclusiveness."

■ At 7:30 a.m., CNN's Carol Lin asked Brazile a pile of puffy questions, except for one about CNN's latest poll: "Nearly half of the likely voters polled say that there is no chance whatsoever...that they would vote for Gore under any circumstances...What creates that resistance?"

Two Mondays ago, CBS's Jane Clayson pressed GOP Reps. J.C. Watts and Henry Bonilla about how "**the [GOP] delegate count still reflects a very white population,**" but this morning none of Brazile's interviewers pressed her about the rigid quotas for Democratic delegates. □

Quote of the Morning

"You talked about Hollywood squares. You could have been talking about Al Gore and Joe Lieberman. They don't really fit. How's Hollywood viewing the ticket?"

— **CBS's Bryant Gumbel to the Hotline's Craig Crawford, The Early Show, August 14**

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No GOP Response to Lieberman

On the Sunday before the GOP convention, *Meet the Press's* Tim Russert followed up an interview with VP choice Dick Cheney with a panel that included Gore partisan James Carville, who laid into Cheney. "I think Mr. Cheney went a long way toward dispelling any questions about his health," Carville crowed. "He was running so fast from his record...it looked like Maurice Greene going 100 meters or something."

But yesterday, Russert had no Republican around to talk about Lieberman running from his record.

Two weeks ago, Carville also claimed that military service was important: "Look at what Al Gore was doing during the Vietnam War and what Dick Cheney and George W. Bush were doing during the Vietnam War...Where was Dick Cheney during the Vietnam War?" Yesterday, Russert did not ask Lieberman about his lack of military service.

No Sense of Humor?

On Monday's *Imus in the Morning*, Don Imus protested MSNBC's decision to not pay for Imus sidekick Bernard McGuirk and a camera crew to go to Los Angeles. McGuirk, who conducts humorous interviews and created the whimsical "Gumbel Aid" to help pay for Bryant Gumbel's divorce, is perhaps too loose a cannon, but Imus pledged to help his radio station WFAN pay for the camera crew if MSNBC continues to refuse. □

Early Show Anchor Pleads for Return to Kennedy Era

Gumbel Deplores Democratic "Centrism"

CBS's Bryant Gumbel showed just how much he admires the Democrats' old liberal roots. In an interview this morning with Maryland Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend on *The Early Show* this morning, he pressed her as to whether the modern Democrats have lost the faith. "**Is this your father's party, your uncle's party philosophically?**" he asked. "**Is this the same party?**"

When Townsend said the Democrats were offering new solutions, Gumbel seemed mournful. "It's much more of a, we're using labels here, much more of a centrist party than it was," Gumbel said, "which begs the question, **why is it more of a centrist party when the needs are just as great as they ever were?**"

In contrast to media grumblings that George W. Bush's nomination was rooted in nepotism, Gumbel summoned positive images of the liberal Kennedy dynasty: "The Kennedy name will be front and center here. You'll be speaking on Tuesday, your cousin Caroline will be speaking Tuesday night. Your Uncle Ted will be speaking. Is it just for nostalgia purposes?" He asked Townsend whether it was "a burden" to be viewed "as **the most promising of a new generation of Kennedys.**"

Three times Gumbel pushed Townsend about her political future. "[DNC Chairman] **Ed Rendell said ten years from now he could see himself being chief of staff to President Kathleen Kennedy Townsend,**" Gumbel told his guest. "**Possible?**"

Bryant Gumbel — always subtle. □

Morning Shows Have Little to Say About Democratic Platform

Democrats Embrace "Centrist Policies"

In contrast to their negative comments about the "hard line" GOP platform, none of the morning shows paid much attention to the Democratic platform, although both the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* labeled it a "centrist" document.

According to Janet Hook, writing in today's *Los Angeles Times*, "The Democratic platform, the party's election-year statement of its agenda for the nation, this year continues a march from liberal orthodoxy to the political center that has been the hallmark of the Clinton era. Despite some modest concessions to the party's traditional liberal interests, the platform that will be approved by the convention Tuesday is a monument to how much the Clinton administration has shifted the party on key issues."

The headline on Hook's story: "**Democratic Platform Set in the Middle of the Road,**" while this morning's *New York Times* carried a similarly-titled story, "**Platform is Centrist, Like GOP's, but Differs in Details,**" in which James Dao wrote that the Democratic document "warmly embraced the centrist policies of the Clinton administration and lavishly credits them for the prosperity of the last seven years."

Odd that today's headline would label the GOP platform as "centrist." On July 28, the *New York Times's* subhead on its GOP platform story stressed that "**Influence of Rightists Holds Firm.**" □

Who Deserves Credit for Longest Economic Boom Ever in U.S? Clinton Gains From *Time's* Distorted History

In the August 14 edition of *Time*, Eric Pooley scolded George W. Bush for allegedly tampering with history. "To deny Democrats credit for the prosperity and accuse them of driving the country 'downhill,' he backdates the boom and pretends it began before Clinton took office," Pooley wrote.

But Pooley's the one fooling around with history — not even the liberal *New York Times* buys into the idea that economic prosperity began on Jan. 20, 1993. "Though unrecognized at the time, **the current recovery began in March 1991, long before Bill Clinton defeated President George Bush** on the assertion that he did not know how to manage the economy, concluded the Times in a February 7, 2000 editorial.

Actually, as Rich Noyes, Director of MRC's Free Market Project wrote in the August 11 edition of *MediaNomics*, the positive growth "was recognized at the time — President Bush tried to draw attention to that fact, but few in the media noticed."

The *MediaNomics* article also noted "The *Times*, not normally considered a conservative newspaper, also pointed out in February that 'except for a mild recession at the beginning of the 1990s, **the American economy has enjoyed uninterrupted growth for almost 18 years.**'" Let's see if the networks point any of this out tonight, as the Democrats attempt to claim credit for historic growth that began 21 months before they arrived in the White House. □

Democrats "Have the Interests of the Workers In Their Souls" CNN: Business-Bashing Delegates "Principled"

There wasn't a trace of skepticism in a report from CNN's Maria Hinojosa this morning about Democratic delegates who joined in anti-business protests in Los Angeles. Instead, the delegates were given free airtime to promote their party as a haven for workers' rights.

"From politics to protests," introduced anchor Daryn Kagen at 10:35 this morning, "some delegates to the Democratic convention join street demonstrations protesting corporate excesses. CNN's Maria Hinojosa says that **for some delegates, it's a matter of principle.**" Of course, if GOP delegates embraced a leftist cause, CNN might say they were principled, too.

Hinojosa quoted four Democrats who were part of a protest targeting what she termed "**the excesses of the corporate establishment.**" The delegates all relayed positive comments about their party and the cause of workers' rights, one saying, "**We need a counterweight to the privileged and the powerful in this country.**"

"Some of the Democratic delegates may have the interests of the workers in their souls," Hinojosa applauded. Balance? Her story included no quotes from business sources — not even from the hotel targeted by the protests — nor did it include any hint that the Democrats' embrace of the protesters strategically echoes the recent Gore campaign theme of "whose side are you on?" □

"Least Liberal Convention"

On Sunday night's *CBS Evening News*, Dan Rather found another sign of Democratic centrism: "And the torched being passed to Gore also highlights a shift in the views of the delegates to this Democratic convention. This is reflected in new findings from a CBS News/*New York Times* survey of the delegates. Bob Schieffer is down on the convention floor. Bob, what's the difference in the delegates this time?"

Schieffer reported: "Dan, the main difference is this is the least liberal collection of Democrats that's been assembled in almost a quarter of a century. CBS News/*New York Times* started polling these delegates back in 1976. Well, for the first time, a clear majority — 56 percent — call themselves moderates. Only 36 percent call themselves liberals — that's the smallest number ever."

"Very Liberal" Convention

On NBC's *Today* program this morning, Tim Russert offered a totally opposite view of the delegates than had been pushed by CBS's Schieffer.

"Much more liberal than the average American," Russert told host Matt Lauer. "These are very liberal activists, Matt. Half the group are women, more than a third minority. They are very much anti-death penalty, anti-voucher schools [sic]. It's a very liberal constituency."

Makes you wonder if they're at the same convention. □